

United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

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Proclamation 7190—Older Americans Month, 1999

April 30, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As we look forward to the 21st century, we honor the millions of older Americans whose contributions have strengthened and sustained our Nation throughout the 20th century. These special citizens have led us through times of conflict, depression, peace, and prosperity and have witnessed firsthand the milestones that have defined this era as the "American Century." This month, as we salute their achievements, let us also renew our commitment to preserve for older Americans a quality of life that will help them look ahead to the future with peace of mind.

In recent decades, extraordinary advances in science, technology, and medicine, as well as our increased awareness of the importance of good nutrition and physical fitness, have enabled Americans to live longer, healthier lives. Over the course of the past 100 years, the average American's life-span has lengthened by nearly three decades, with the percentage of older Americans in our population more than tripling. By the year 2030, one in five Americans will be aged 65 or older.

As we enter the new millennium with a strong economy and the first budget surpluses since the 1960s, we have a historic opportunity to embrace the challenges and possibilities of a society where men and women will lead longer, more active, more productive lives. My Administration is working to make the most of this opportunity by proposing to set aside more than 75 percent

of any budget surplus over the next 15 years to protect Social Security and Medicare; and we will also work to increase our investment in the scientific and medical research and development programs that will continue to lengthen and improve the lives of Americans in the years to come. We must continue to support older Americans—as well as their caregivers and those who provide critical home and community-based services—through a strong, reauthorized Older Americans Act; and we must work to ensure that long-term care needs are met now and in the future.

The theme of this year's celebration, "Honor the Past, Imagine the Future: Towards a Society for all Ages," reminds us of the profound debt of gratitude we owe to the generations of older Americans whose hard work, courage, faith, sacrifice, and patriotism helped to make this Nation great. Through turmoil and triumph, these Americans not only have defended our fundamental values of liberty, justice, and equality, but they also have handed down to younger generations the enduring traditions of community, family, and love of country that bind our society together.

Long life is a gift we must cherish and a wonderful opportunity and responsibility for which we must prepare. I urge all Americans to take time during this month to reaffirm our commitment, as individuals and as a Nation, to meet the challenges of an aging society. Working together, we can improve the lives of our older citizens, their families, and their caregivers and strive to ensure that all Americans enjoy healthy, financially secure, and productive lives.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 1999 as Older Americans Month. I urge Government officials, business people, community leaders, educators, volunteers, and all the other people of the United States to celebrate the contributions older Americans have made throughout their lives to the progress of our Nation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of April, in the

year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

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**Proclamation 7191—Law Day,
U.S.A., 1999**

April 30, 1999

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

America's founders recognized that the rule of law is the greatest guarantor of freedom and justice, the crucial barricade protecting civilization from chaos, democracy from tyranny. Among the chief grievances they enumerated in the Declaration of Independence were that "the present King of Great Britain . . . has refused this Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good. . . . He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the Tenure of their Offices, and the Amount and Payment of their Salaries."

The Constitution and Bill of Rights reflect our founders' reverence for and faith in the rule of law, and they stand as an enduring charter of freedom and equality that continues to protect our fundamental rights today. But only the passage of additional laws over time has fulfilled the promise of justice enshrined in that charter. Amendments abolishing slavery and guaranteeing due process and equal protection to everyone came only after the Civil War—nearly 80 years after the ratification of the Constitution. It took almost another century, and the courageous and persistent efforts of lawyers such as Thurgood Marshall, to establish that the equal protection clause prohibits governments from enforcing segregation in schools and other public arenas. Women did not gain

the right to vote until the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920.

During the past 4 decades, our Nation has continued to pursue the ideals of justice and equality. President Kennedy and President Johnson fought to enact what would become the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, laws that safeguard the rights of citizens to vote, to work, to use public accommodations, and to attend school free from illegal discrimination. In 1967, President Johnson signed the Age Discrimination in Employment Act to protect older Americans against discriminatory treatment in their jobs.

In 1990, President Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act, landmark legislation that recognizes the right of people with disabilities to have equal opportunity for employment and equal access to public services. Building on the Americans with Disabilities Act, I announced a new initiative in January of this year to remove significant barriers that prevent people with disabilities from joining the work force. We will invest more than two billion dollars over the next 5 years to provide tax credits to offset critical and expensive transportation costs, increased funding for assistive technology research, and greater access to health care for people with disabilities.

In May of 1998, I was proud to sign Executive Order 13087, which amends Federal equal employment opportunity policy to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in the Federal civilian work force. My Administration is working with congressional leaders to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would prohibit most private employers from firing good workers solely because they are gay or lesbian. And we must secure equal pay legislation to ensure that women and minority employees receive fair compensation for their work.

America's trust in the rule of law and our continuing quest for equality under the law have defined our history for more than 200 years. Now, as we look forward to a new century, we must renew our commitment to the spirit of our Constitution and the strong foundation of civil rights laws that guarantee both our freedom and our security. We must